

Tears often fill Helen Martin's eyes as she drives slowly around her 40 000 hectare sheep and cattle station and sees the bleached bones of stock scattered in the dust.

'You get hardened, but in a drought like this . . . well, it just gets to you after a while,' she says.

'Each time you come across an animal that has died it cuts deep. In a way it's like a little part of you has gone, too.'

Dingarra, the property Helen, 60, and her husband, David, 58, run in south-western Queensland, was once a showpiece. Today it is a dust bowl. About 1200 sheep and 250 cattle, their ribs showing, wander the paddocks trying to nibble at inedible scrub. Four years ago, Dingarra carried 6000 sheep and 2000 cattle . . .

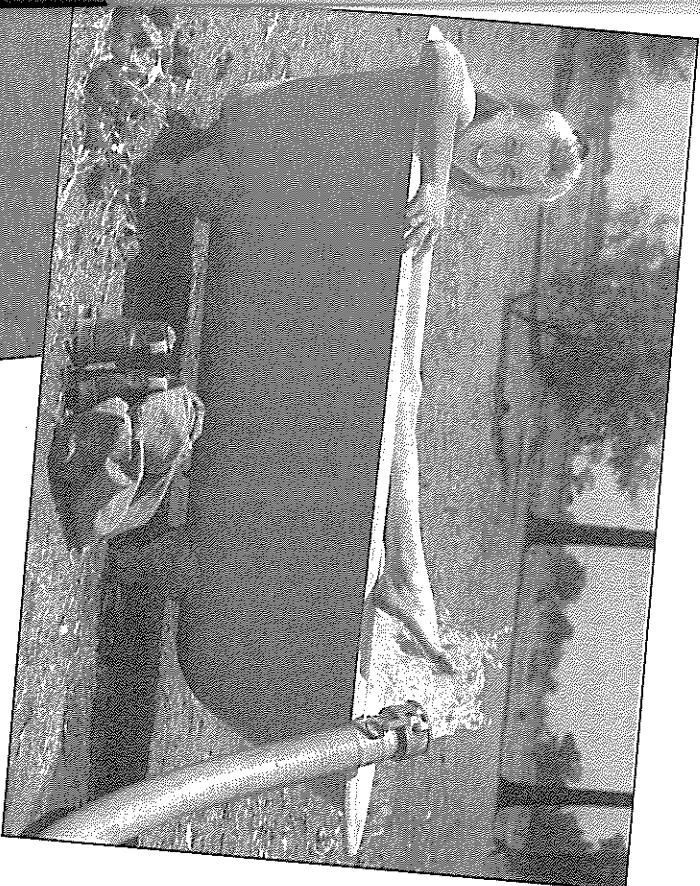
The Martins have had no taxable income for the past two years and have a \$200 000

overdraft, but they will not give up. 'It has to rain one day and I don't want to miss that for the world,' David says. 'I want to see grass again.'

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TOP RIGHT: It can be a long time between baths when water has to be brought in by truck. When the town of Quandialla ran out of water at the end of 1994, Sharon Kelly had to wait a month to get a proper bath.

RIGHT: The rains returned to Quandialla early in 1995. Sharon gets her first



And rain it did. On the 14

January 1995, rain began to fall across northern Australia and moved into Queensland and New South Wales. The rains were good, many places

recording falls over 150 mm.

The Darling River, which had stopped flowing in its upper section, began to flow again.

At the time of writing the grip of drought has been loosened, but the effects of the worst drought in this century in eastern Australia will be felt

